



Feinstein, Lewis, Radanovich, Bono Seek to
Eradicate Marijuana Grown on Public Lands
July 29, 2005

Washington, DC – U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) and U.S. Representatives Jerry Lewis, George Radanovich and Mary Bono (all R-Calif.) today called on the National Park Service to address the severe problem of illegal marijuana cultivation on public lands. Separately, Senator Feinstein and Representatives Lewis and Radanovich urged the U.S. Forest Service to take similar action.

Following is the text of a letter Senator Feinstein and Representatives Lewis, Radanovich and Bono sent to National Park Service Director Fran Mainella:

“We write to bring your attention to two serious law enforcement matters facing California’s National Parks.

First, it is now clear that illegal marijuana cultivation on public lands has become a severe problem for California. We are stunned by the fact that in 2004 alone, authorities seized 200,000 marijuana plants worth approximately \$800 million dollars in a single California county, Tulare County. Most of these marijuana plants were cultivated, presumably by individuals linked to Mexican drug cartels, in both the Sequoia National Park and Sequoia National Forest. National Park Rangers have reported that many of these individuals engaged in cultivating marijuana plants on these public lands are armed with semi-automatic pistols and assault rifles— unquestionably posing a grave threat to park resources, visitors, employees, and residents of surrounding communities.

Second, these drug growers and traders are utilizing parts of Joshua Tree National Park and the Mojave National Preserve as thoroughfares for marijuana drug smuggling into Mexico. Public land marijuana cultivation has become one of the most profitable moneymakers for these Mexican drug cartels.

The National Park Service has not dedicated sufficient resources to tackling these growing problems. The Conference Committee on the FY 2006 Interior Appropriations bill has recently completed its work. In deference to the Service's need for flexibility in allocating staff resources, the Conferees did not earmark staff positions to address this serious problem. We now ask that you utilize that flexibility to apply sufficient law enforcement resources towards ending illegal drug cultivation in the National Parks.

We ask that you set aside the additional resources needed to address this issue in the Pacific West region in the Fiscal Year 2006. We also request a report on a multi-year plan to resolve this serious problem, including 1) an estimate of the extent of this criminal activity, 2) what additional law enforcement personnel are needed and how you are coordinating with other

law enforcement agencies to combat this illicit trade, and 3) how you plan to rehabilitate the park resources damaged by the marijuana plantations. Thank you for your attention to this matter.”

Following is the text of a letter Senator Feinstein and Representatives Lewis and Radanovich sent to U.S. Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth:

“We write to bring to your attention a serious matter facing California’s National Forests. It is now clear that illegal marijuana cultivation on public lands has become a severe problem for California.

We are stunned by the fact that in 2004 alone, authorities seized 200,000 marijuana plants worth approximately \$800 million dollars in a single California county, Tulare County. Most of these marijuana plants were cultivated, presumably by individuals linked to Mexican drug cartels, in both the Sequoia National Forest and Sequoia National Park. There are reports that many of these individuals engaged in cultivating marijuana plants on these public lands are armed with semi-automatic pistols and assault rifles—unquestionably posing a grave threat to public resources, visitors, employees, and residents of surrounding communities. Public land marijuana cultivation has become one of the most profitable moneymakers for these Mexican drug cartels.

The U.S. Forest Service has not dedicated sufficient resources to tackling this growing problem. The Conference Committee on the FY 2006 Interior Appropriations bill has recently completed its work. In deference to the Service's need for flexibility in allocating staff resources, the Conferees did not earmark staff positions to address this serious problem. We now ask that you utilize that flexibility to apply sufficient law enforcement resources towards ending illegal drug cultivation in the National Forests.

We ask that you set aside the additional resources needed to address this issue in the Pacific Southwest region in the Fiscal Year 2006. We also request a report on a multi-year plan to resolve this serious problem, including 1) an estimate of the extent of this criminal activity, 2) what additional law enforcement personnel are needed and how you are coordinating with other law enforcement agencies to combat this illicit trade, and 3) how you plan to rehabilitate the forest resources damaged by the marijuana plantations. Thank you for your attention to this matter.”

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